

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

*Memorandum*



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
2 September 1966

ARMY and DOS review(s) completed.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Official South Vietnamese reaction to French President de Gaulle's 1 September speech on Vietnam was highly critical and included a public remark by Chief of State Nguyen Van Thieu to the effect that the speech was "meaningless for South Vietnam." By contrast, Hanoi has mentioned portions of the speech which were critical of the US in a favorable light.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

Three US operations--AMARILLO, LAHAINA, and AIEA--ended yesterday in the area north and west of Saigon (Paras. 1-3). Two-phase Operation SUNSET BEACH began today in Hau Nghia Province, where the 269th Viet Cong Battalion with a strength of 500 men is located (Para. 4). Four small actions in the delta resulted in 17 Viet Cong killed (Para. 5). A Viet Cong force attacked a bus in Bien Hoa Province killing ten and wounding 18 (Para. 6).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

General Thieu today aired his views on De Gaulle's 1 September speech dealing with Vietnam, and on the "march North" theme (Paras. 1-3). Further insights are available into the recent Peoples-Army Council recommendation of ground action against North Vietnam (Para. 4). Foreign Minister Do [redacted] reacted to De Gaulle's speech (Paras. 5-6). Thich Tam Chau describes the present situation, vis-a-vis the Buddhists and their stand on elections, as a "grave crisis" (Paras. 7-8). Viet Cong antielection plans in the Saigon area are evaluated in the light of enemy forces available in the capital area (Paras. 9-10).

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IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: The major North Vietnamese address on the anniversary of the DRV national day contained a pro forma reiteration of the Vietnamese Communists' will to persist and their confidence in ultimate victory (Paras. 1-2). Chinese statements on the DRV national day made cautious references to possible Chinese intervention in the Vietnamese war and concentrated heavily on attacking the Soviet Union (Paras. 3-4). Soviet commentary on the DRV national day routinely stressed the USSR's support for the Vietnamese Communists (Para. 5). Hanoi's first mention of De Gaulle's Phnom Penh speech on Vietnam is reported (Paras. 6-7).

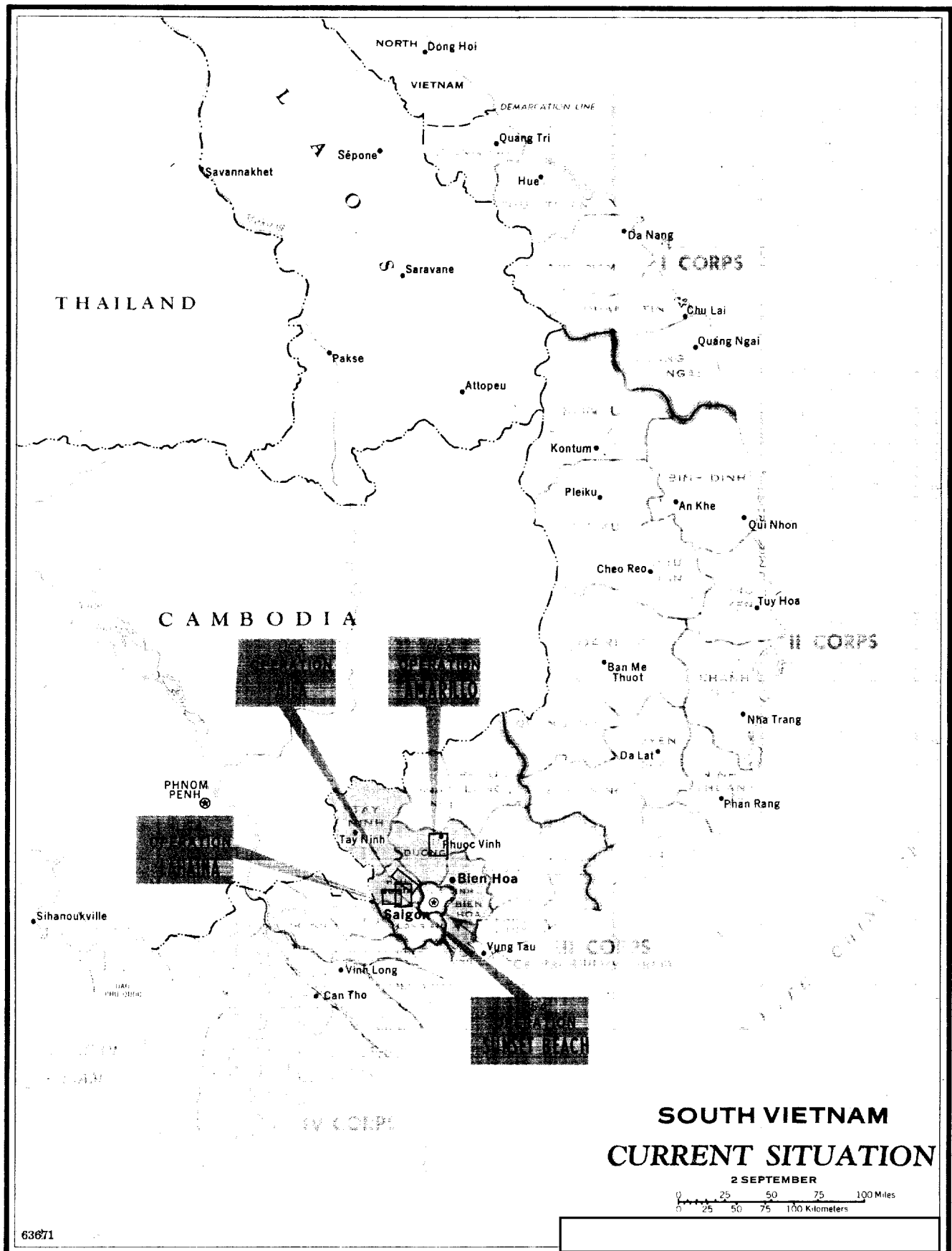
VI. Other Major Aspects: President de Gaulle's 1 September speech in Cambodia is discussed (Paras. 1-4).

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# I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Operation AMARILLO, a route clearing operation conducted by two battalions of the US 1st Infantry Division in Binh Duong Province about 30 miles north of Saigon, ended yesterday. American casualties totaled 43 killed and 248 wounded in the operation, which began on 22 August. Communist losses included 102 killed and six captured. A total of 138 tactical air strikes were flown in support of the operation.

2. The one-battalion US search-and-destroy Operation LAHAINA, which began on 6 August in an area of Hau Nghia Province about 30 miles west of Saigon, also terminated yesterday. One American was killed and three wounded compared with the Viet Cong casualty total of 29 killed and 40 captured.

3. Search-and-destroy Operation AIEA, conducted by two battalions of the US 25th Infantry Division in an area about 30 miles northwest of Saigon, was terminated yesterday. Four Americans were killed in this operation, which began on 7 August. Total Viet Cong casualties were 22 killed and 18 captured.

4. Operation SUNSET BEACH, a two-phase search-and-destroy operation conducted by the US 25th Infantry Division, began early on 2 September. The area of operation is centered in Hau Nghia Province about 15 miles west of Saigon. The first phase, from 2-6 September, is being conducted in the vicinity of population centers and polling places. In the second phase, from 7-10 September, search-and-destroy operations will be conducted in areas removed from the populated regions. The 269th Viet Cong Battalion with an estimated strength of 500 men is believed to be in the area. US forces consist of two battalions in phase one and three battalions in phase two.

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5. Four small-unit actions in the delta provinces of IV Corps yesterday resulted in allied casualties of three killed and three wounded. Viet Cong losses included 17 killed and five weapons captured.

6. An estimated platoon-size Viet Cong force today ambushed a bus near Bien Hoa city in Bien Hoa Province some 18 miles northeast of Saigon. Ten persons were killed and 18 wounded. No Americans were involved in the incident.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Chief of State General Nguyen Van Thieu, talking to the press at a ceremony today, dismissed General de Gaulle's 1 September speech in Phnom Penh, which dealt with the Vietnamese situation, as "meaningless" for South Vietnam. He declared that De Gaulle's remarks did not personally concern him, and that the French President should direct his remarks to Hanoi "for a change" and tell the North Vietnamese to stop the shooting which they had started.

2. During the course of the same press interview, Thieu also indicated that he would not be a candidate for the presidency in any future government that resulted from the deliberations of the National Constituent Assembly. Thieu's statement--similar to earlier declarations by Premier Ky--could be intended as a government conciliatory gesture to the Buddhists who have been opposing the forthcoming elections. [REDACTED]

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3. General Thieu once again called for an invasion of North Vietnam in retaliation for the Communist infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam. Thieu argued that if the bombing of the North does not force Hanoi to change its point of view and to cease infiltration into the South, this solution must be adopted. He further maintained that invasion of the North would cause the war to end quickly.

4. Thieu's "march North" remarks are especially significant when viewed in the context of the recent People's Army Council (PAC) communiqué which offered the same advice to the government. The US Embassy has learned that the PAC was asked by Premier Ky to consider the matter of the North Vietnamese violations of the DMZ, and to make recommendations about them. The embassy believes that Ky has used this device to obtain a show of popular support for an invasion of the North. He was piqued over the adverse reactions abroad to similar

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opinions which he recently expressed in a US News and World Report interview. The US Embassy notes that such a course of action, although recognized as unrealistic, is widely popular among Vietnamese even outside military circles.

#### Further Reaction to De Gaulle Speech

5. Foreign Minister Tran Van Do was even more vehement than Thieu in criticizing De Gaulle's Phnom Penh speech. He told a US Embassy officer that he was particularly indignant over De Gaulle's reference to the war as one of "national resistance," and the implication that the United States was opposing nationalists in South Vietnam. Do was also vexed by De Gaulle's comparing the French experience in Algeria with the current situation in South Vietnam.

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#### Buddhist Views on Elections

7. The moderate Buddhist leader, Thich Tam Chau, has indicated to a US Embassy officer that he intends to refrain from making any public statement opposing the Buddhist Institute's call for "noncooperation" in, and boycott of, the forthcoming elections. Chau personally is against the Institute policy which aligns them rather closely with the Viet Cong efforts to torpedo the elections.

8. Chau also characterized the present situation as a "grave crisis" which has put the Buddhists in a bad light in respect to the violent Viet Cong efforts to disrupt the elections. He favors an Institute statement which would make it clear that Buddhists do not condone violence in opposing the elections and will take no responsibility for Communist violence.

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Viet Cong Antielection Plans

9. A recently captured top secret document of the Communist Saigon - Cholon - Gia Dinh Special Sector Current Affairs Committee outlines plans of the Viet Cong to disrupt the 11 September elections. The directive, prepared on orders of the Viet Cong Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN) is probably typical of those received by other party organs throughout the country. The singular feature of this plan, in view of reports of plans of the Viet Cong in other parts of South Vietnam, is that the directive calls for a cessation of military-terroristic activity by the morning of 11 September. The document suggests some feeling among the Viet Cong that violence continued into the voting period itself may be counterproductive to their objectives. On election day, the only Viet Cong antielection activity ordered by the directive for the Saigon area is propaganda urging the people not to vote.

10. A recent estimate prepared by MACV of enemy military and paramilitary resources in the Saigon area states that there are from 2,700-3,200 persons who might be assigned antielection military tasks. Approximately 1,400 cadres and some 1,250 sympathizers are also estimated to be available in the Saigon area.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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## V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong delivered the major address at a rally marking the 21st anniversary of the DRV's national day on 2 September which was attended by nearly all the leading North Vietnamese officials including Ho Chi Minh and General Giap. Pham's remarks contained a pro forma reiteration of the Vietnamese Communists' will to persist and their confidence in ultimate victory. The DRV premier praised the "brilliant victories" of the Liberation Forces in the South and reiterated that the four points of the DRV and the five points of the Front continue to represent the concentrated expression of "the content and fundamental spirit of the 1954 Geneva agreements." He condemned US offers of negotiations as a "shameless trick that can surely deceive nobody," and called upon the Vietnamese people to practice "to the highest degree" economy in production, fighting, consumption, manpower, and material "so as to have abundant reserves for protracted fighting."

2. Only on the question of North Vietnam's relationship with its bloc allies did Pham's remarks differ from the routine. In the early part of the speech he took the highly unusual step of sending Hanoi's "warmest greetings" to "the great Chinese people" and to the "other fraternal socialist countries," but he omitted any mention of the Soviet Union. Toward the end of the speech, however, this apparent bow to Peking was countered by singling out the Soviets for special note in the context of bloc assistance and the struggle against imperialism. The DRV premier declared that "the great Soviet people are always at our side," but no mention was made of China in this regard. Additionally, in terms which could only irritate the Chinese, Pham called upon the socialist countries and all sympathetic movements "to unite into a single front and struggle resolutely to defeat the aggressive war of the US imperialists in Vietnam and other places." The normal Hanoi practice is to

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pair references to Peking and Moscow closely in such a way as to offer minimal affront to either.

3. Chinese statements made in connection with DRV national day contained only vague, cautious references to possible Chinese intervention in the Vietnamese war. They fell into the pattern of other Chinese promises of assistance to the DRV made in recent months. Peking again claimed that China was the "reliable rear area" of Vietnam and that all preparations had been made to deal "joint blows" at the US.

4. At gatherings in Peking celebrating the anniversary, Chinese speeches concentrated primarily on attacking the Soviet Union and stressed particularly charges of Soviet-US collaboration vis-a-vis Vietnam. The Chinese in recent months have become more blatant in their anti-Soviet blasts made at Chinese-Vietnamese gatherings, with little apparent concern at the awkward position in which this places the Vietnamese. By contrast, Chinese statements at anniversary celebrations a year ago concentrated their fire on the US.

5. Soviet commentary on DRV national day routinely stressed the "daily strengthening" of the USSR's "friendly relations" with Hanoi and the "all-round fraternal cooperation" between the two countries. Moscow radio on 1 September asserted that the government of the USSR is taking the necessary measures to render the DRV "all-round aid" including "material resources, military material and specialists for the successful repulsion of American aggression, strengthening of the defense capacity, and satisfaction of the requirements of the Vietnamese economy."

#### Hanoi on De Gaulle

6. Hanoi's first mention of De Gaulle's Phnom Penh speech came in a radiobroadcast to South Vietnam on 2 September in which an AFP account of the

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French President's address was quoted. The Hanoi broadcast stressed those portions of De Gaulle's speech which commented unfavorably upon the role of the US in South Vietnam. It also repeated De Gaulle's call for a solution to the Vietnamese problem which would ensure "the neutrality and right of self-determination of the Indochinese peoples" and quoted De Gaulle to the effect that the US must withdraw all of its troops for that solution to be achieved.

7. The broadcast made no North Vietnamese comment on De Gaulle's speech. The AFP correspondent in Hanoi, however, claimed today that the French President's address provided "great satisfaction" to the North Vietnamese.

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## VI. OTHER MAJOR ASPECTS

1. De Gaulle's singling out of the US as the country bearing responsibility for the continuation of the Vietnamese conflict was the sole innovation in an address which faithfully reflected past French pronouncements on Vietnam. In the 1 September speech in Cambodia--his first major public address devoted exclusively to Southeast Asia--De Gaulle pointedly omitted any reference to the responsibilities which Hanoi and Peking bear in the conflict. His comparison of the US role in Vietnam to the French colonial involvement in Algeria probably was intended as a further reminder that Paris sees the war as a struggle for national independence and not as a broader confrontation between an expanding Communism and the Free World.

2. De Gaulle and Prince Sihanouk in a later joint declaration called on "all foreign powers" to withdraw from the "territory of Vietnam," but the reference to the specific countries and geographic territory involved was probably deliberately ambiguous and could be interpreted as excepting Hanoi.

3. De Gaulle first publicly spelled out the basic French position on Vietnam in a July 1964 speech calling for a return to the principles of neutrality and nonintervention established at the 1954 Geneva Conference, for the convening of a similar conference, and for the assumption of great-power responsibility for the area. The Cambodian speech--and indeed all pronouncements De Gaulle has made on the subject since 1964--did not deviate in any substantial way from the principles cited in 1964.

4. The great advance buildup accorded the speech by French officials, De Gaulle's meeting with a representative of Hanoi, and contacts between the Gaullist entourage and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam were probably all intended to focus world attention on De Gaulle as a potential mediator.

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